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MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

ARMY review(s) completed.

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5 May 1967



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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

US Marines have captured the last of three strategic hills north of Khe Sanh.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US Marines have captured the last of three strategic hills north of Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province after 11 days of heavy fighting (Paras. 1-4). Two South Vietnamese Army search-and-destroy operations report successful encounters with enemy forces (Paras. 5-6). Aerial photography has revealed the existence of eight more enemy artillery positions in the DMZ (Paras. 7-9).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

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The Constituent Assembly has approved about one third of the presidential electoral law (Para. 2).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:

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only 20,000 deaths had been caused by US air strikes since August 1964 (Paras. 5-6).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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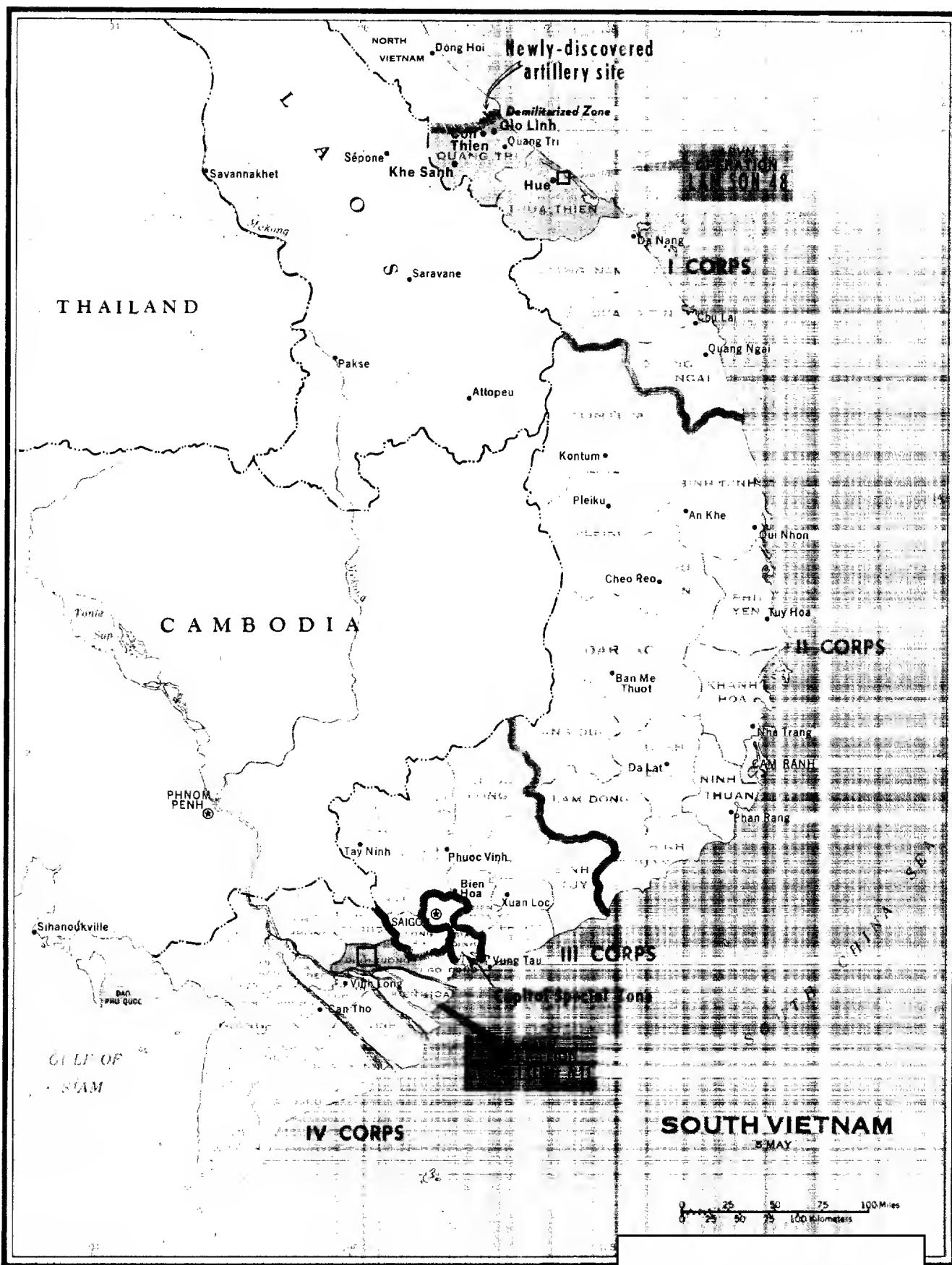
V. Communist Political Developments: Recent US air strikes are reported to have seriously affected morale in Hanoi (Paras. 1-2). The VC Liberation Front representative in Hanoi has been making a special effort to convince non-Communist colleagues in Hanoi that there are significant differences of opinion and policy between Hanoi and the Front (Paras. 3-5).

VI. Other Major Aspects: A report of difficulties in Haiphong port operations and possible food shortages is contradicted by other evidence (Paras. 1-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. On the afternoon of 5 May, US Marines secured the northern heights of Hill 881 northwest of the Marine outpost at Khe Sanh in Quang Tri Province. Press reports state that enemy resistance was light at this objective, indicating that the North Vietnamese may have finally abandoned their attempt to control the strategic high ground overlooking Khe Sanh and enemy infiltration routes. Cumulative casualties for this 11-day action now stand at 133 Marines killed and 383 wounded, as opposed to confirmed enemy losses of 551 killed. The Marines estimate that at least an additional 600 of the enemy were probably killed and many were wounded.

2. MACV has provided additional information from the interrogation of two North Vietnamese soldiers who were captured during the Khe Sanh battle. The prisoners claim to be members of the 2nd Regiment of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 325th Division.

3. One of the prisoners stated that the 1st and 2nd regiments of the division had a transportation mission--presumably in the Laos panhandle. The 3rd Regiment was to screen this activity by controlling the high ground near Khe Sanh. This man further stated that the 4th Battalion of the 2nd Regiment had to reinforce the 3rd Regiment when the latter unit sustained heavy casualties in encounters with US Marines. Both the 1st and 3rd regiments are now reportedly back in Laos, north of Route 9.

4. The commitment of the NVA 325th Division to South Vietnam--if confirmed--could raise the number of North Vietnamese division-level units in the DMZ - Quang Tri Province area to as many as five. The 324 "B" and 341st divisions have already been confirmed in the DMZ area, [redacted]

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Two ARVN Operations Successfully Engage Enemy Forces

5. South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) troops conducted successful operations at opposite ends of the country on 3 and 4 May. In an area centered about six miles east of Hue in northern Thua Thien Province, ARVN forces of Operation LAM SON 48 reported killing 89 enemy soldiers on 4 May. Six ARVN soldiers were killed in the five-hour fire fight and 29 were wounded. This is the second successful South Vietnamese operation this week near the threatened northern provincial capital. Operation LAM SON 47 had accounted for more than 150 enemy killed during an engagement five miles north of the city on 2 May.

6. Meanwhile, in the Mekong Delta province of Dinh Tuong, 45 miles southwest of Saigon, ARVN troops in Operation CUU LONG 61C killed 78 members of the Viet Cong 514th Battalion and captured 45 suspects in two days of heavy fighting. In this action, the South Vietnamese lost four killed and 26 men wounded. Earlier this week, elements of the US 9th Infantry Division in Dinh Tuong Province killed nearly 200 members of this same Viet Cong battalion in a heavy engagement. This area of central Dinh Tuong Province has long been known as a major Communist stronghold.

New Communist Artillery Sites Located in the DMZ

7. Eight Communist artillery positions have been located in the eastern section of the DMZ about four miles north-northeast of the allied outpost at Con Thien by recent allied aerial photography. Six of the eight positions are believed to be occupied but the size of the weapons has not been determined; a fire-direction center was also observed.

8. These newly discovered artillery sites probably participated in the heavy barrage on 27-28 April against US and South Vietnamese positions immediately south of the DMZ in which at least 12 Americans were killed and nearly 200 others wounded. Moreover, the US 175-mm. artillery position at Gio Linh--a favorite target of Communist mortar crews--has been subjected to two artillery attacks that included 105-mm. howitzer fire.

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9. These Communist bombardments are in part intended to neutralize--at minimum enemy expense--the apparently successful effects of the long-range American guns against enemy targets in and north of the DMZ.

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similar attacks--including both artillery and mortar fire--can be expected in the future against allied positions in northern Quang Tri Province.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Presidential Electoral Law

2. In three days of plenary sessions, the Constituent Assembly has approved about one third of the presidential election law. The articles expected to cause the most controversy will be debated in the next few meetings. The only significant alteration of the draft regulations so far is a stipulation that prospective candidates must be "introduced" by at least 30 representatives from among the nearly 600 elected assembly deputies and provincial and municipal council members. Such a provision is designed to limit the field of candidates by eliminating those who have little popular support. This apparent concession to the procivilian deputies may make it easier for assemblymen who favor a military candidate to keep out of the law any provision for a runoff between the candidates with the highest pluralities.

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Reports of Civilian Casualties in the DRV

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5.

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on 28 April that "total deaths in North Vietnam from American action since August 1964 were only 20,000." [redacted] this low figure was the "main factor" in encouraging the North Vietnamese to continue the war.

6. There has been no reliable reporting on North Vietnamese casualties during the war--either civilian or military. This figure of 20,000, however, is well within the range of various US estimates of North Vietnamese casualties.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1.

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[redacted]
recent air strikes in the Hanoi area had seriously affected morale, that there was a definite breakdown in order as people ran wildly toward shelters, and that people were no longer attempting to hide their fear or fatigue. In contrast,

[redacted] the Hanoi population was generally calm and well disciplined. It is apparently true, however, that the number of air raid alarms has significantly increased in the past few weeks, and that people have had to seek shelter both during the day and at night. It is thus possible that there was at least a temporary panic produced among the populace. It is too early to assess the long-range effect on popular morale and will.

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2.

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Liberation Front Stresses Its "Independence"

3. The Liberation Front representative in Hanoi, Nguyen Van Tien, has apparently been making a special effort in the past few weeks to convince his non-Communist colleagues in the North Vietnamese capital that significant differences of opinion and policy exist between Hanoi and the Liberation Front. In early April,

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claimed that Tien was telling his diplomatic colleagues in Hanoi that the Front and not the DRV should be contacted on matters concerning South Vietnam. In the same month,

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[redacted] the Front representative had given [redacted] the impression that Hanoi authorities were genuinely concerned over the Front's asserting too much independence and, specifically, did not approve of the Front's willingness to establish a coalition government in South Vietnam.

4. There have been no reliable reports of Hanoi's disapproval of this long-standing Liberation Front policy of willingness to participate in a non-Communist interim government in South Vietnam prior to reunification with the North, and both Hanoi and Front spokesmen have endorsed this policy. In recent statements, the Front has offered to cooperate with non-Communists regardless of their past political activities--with the exception of those prominently associated with the present South Vietnamese Government--and has even hinted that some prominent members of the present Saigon government would be acceptable but not any of the so-called "Ky-Thieu clique."

5. Since approximately the first of the year, there have been scattered rumors, [redacted] alleging that contacts have been made between members of the Ky government in Saigon and Liberation Front members. Such reports cannot be verified, [redacted]

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

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1.

[redacted] port congestion in Haiphong delayed the unloading of merchant ships from two to three weeks, that ships carrying foodstuffs received preferential treatment, and that the laborers unloading the food ships were not only "greedily pilfering the soya beans," but were eating them raw on the docks. [redacted]

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[redacted] one reason for the delay was the fact that the shipments were transloaded directly into trucks, and that there were not enough trucks or lighters to maintain a high rate of discharge. [redacted] several ships were unable to enter the harbor because their draft was too deep.

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Silting Problems in Haiphong Channel

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3.

[redacted] indicate continuing silting problems at the main Haiphong ship channel, making it difficult but not impossible for ocean freighters to enter the harbor. [redacted]

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Food Problems

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4.

[redacted] Food supplies, however, are tight in North Vietnam at this particular time, largely because of a poor harvest in 1966. Nevertheless, shipments of food have been entering North Vietnam at record rates since the first of the year, and [redacted]

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The DRV Government has used these grain imports increasingly as substitutes for the rice ration, but [redacted]

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throughout 1967 the ration has generally been honored in full. In the countryside, regime spokesmen have told the peasants that they cannot expect the ration to be maintained at peacetime levels, but there is no indication that at least minimum levels of the ration are not being maintained. [redacted]

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5. It is too early to determine whether the early rice crop--due to be harvested in June and July and accounting for about one third of the annual rice harvest--will be large enough to ease the tight food situation. The planned acreage for this crop was below that of the previous year, [redacted]

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